

Remarks:

1. Objections and Rejections.

Claims 1 and 3-14 are pending in this application. Applicant acknowledges with appreciation that the Examiner has allowed claims 12-14 and that the Examiner indicates that claim 2 contains allowable subject matter and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of its base claim. Nevertheless, claims 1, 4, and 9 stand objected to as allegedly including certain informalities, and claims 1 and 3 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as allegedly rendered obvious by Patent No. US 6,500,029 B2 to Nitta in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,611,867 to Ichimura et al. ("Ichimura"). Applicant respectfully traverses.

2. Informalities.

As noted above, claims 1, 4, and 9 stand objected to as allegedly including certain informalities. Office Action, Page 2, Lines 1-4. Applicant is amending claims 1 and 4 to remove the alleged informalities in those claims. With respect to claim 9, the Office Action "is unclear what the 'escaping portions' are." Office Action, Page 2, Line 3. Applicant notes that the claimed "escaping portions" are disclosed by, for example, recess 43 or 44 in **Fig. 7** or **Fig. 8**, respectively. Appl'n, Page 8, Lines 18-28, and Page 9, Lines 1-8. Applicant also is amending claims 9 and 10 to replace the term "escaping portions" with "recesses." In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the objections to claims 1, 4, and 9.

3. Obviousness.

As noted above, claims 1 and 3 stand rejected as allegedly rendered obvious by Nitta in view of Ichimura. Applicant is amending claim 1 to include the limitations of allowable claim 2. In view of this amendment, Applicant maintains that Nitta in view of Ichimura is not alleged to disclose or suggest each and every limitation of the invention of claim 1, as amended. Moreover, "[i]f an independent claim is non-obvious under 35 U.S.C. 103, then any claim depending therefrom is nonobvious." MPEP 2143.03 (citations omitted). Thus, because claim 3 depends from amended claim 1, Nitta in view of Ichimura fails to demonstrate a *prima facie* case for obviousness with respect to claim 3. Therefore, Applicant

respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the obviousness rejections of claims 1 and 3.

Conclusion:

Applicant respectfully submits that this application, as amended, is in condition for allowance, and such disposition is earnestly solicited. If the Examiner believes that an interview with Applicant's representatives, either in person or by telephone, would expedite prosecution of this application, we would welcome such an opportunity.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: June 2, 2005

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